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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, Oct. 28, 1968

1:25 p. ~~SECRET~~ DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NLJ 91-484

By WJ, NARA, Date 12-7-92

MR. PRESIDENT:

Brooding on Bus Wheeler's dilemma and assuming that you do not wish to issue final orders until you have a face-to-face talk with Gen. Abrams, I believe there are two fundamental options:

- send out an instruction tonight to Harriman and Vance to get with the North Vietnamese and say that mechanical arrangements are such that we really need back those 16 hours;
- if they kick and scream at this, slide the whole arrangement 24 hours.

The problem with 24 hours is that these highly correct North Vietnamese diplomats, French-trained, may not wish to have a meeting on Sunday, November 3. They may therefore offer us Monday, November 4.

In any case, this is a problem you may wish to discuss with Sect. Rusk -- perhaps at the late afternoon meeting you mentioned.

WJ Rostow

P.S. I think our argument would have greater credibility with the North Vietnamese if we frankly explained to them that you wish to have a last-minute conference with General Abrams in Washington, which cannot take place until tomorrow morning.

P.P.S. Another alternative: If the North Vietnamese do not want to give us back the 16 hours and we do not wish the first meeting to be closer to the election, we can tell them that our time problems are such that, even with a maximum effort, we cannot guarantee that every unit will get the word by the time of the bombing cessation. Therefore, they should not complain if there is some spill over for, say, 7 hours after the time we specify.

FYI: The main problem is not the Air units or the Navy, it is the forward Infantry and Artillery battalions. In short, we would be asking them for a de facto 7-hour extension on the time of the bombing cessation.

WJ
~~SECRET~~/HARVAN DOUBLE PLUS

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